

**WISCONSIN CONSERVATION CONGRESS  
MIGRATORY COMMITTEE FALL MEETING MINUTES  
COUNTRY SPRINGS HOTEL  
STEVENS POINT  
FRIDAY AUGUST 4, 2006  
RECORDED BY ACTING SECRETARY MITCHELL FISHER**

**Meeting Called to Order:**

The August meeting of the Migratory Committee was called to order at 7:01 pm by Acting Chairman John Edelblute. Edelblute, secretary of the committee, addressed the committee and explained that Migratory Committee Chairman Richard Koerner was ill and unable to attend the meeting. Edelblute appointed Mitchell Fisher to act as secretary for the meeting.

**Roll Call:**

Committee members present: Ronald Earnest, Mitchell Fisher, Ray Heidel, James Klein, Rick Koenig, Al Marotz, Guy McFarren, Elmer Miller, David Nowak, Roger Roehl, Jerry Rowland, Jeff Scott, Allen Shook, Kurt Saab, Alan Suchla, and Herb Theisen.

Committee members excuse: Craig Conroy, Noel Dolde, Richard Koener, Brad Wagner, and Mark Weber. Committee members unexcused: James Dailey and Todd Oestreich.

DNR: Kent Van Horn, Kimberlee Benton and Warden Kevin Mickelburg.

Also in attendance: Congress Chairman Ed Harvey and two concerned hunters (names unknown)

**PRESENTATION BY KENT VAN HORN**

**Review of Last Year's Harvest:**

Van Horn briefly discussed some of the statistics gathered from the 2005 USFWS national waterfowl survey. Wisconsin ranks number 2 in total duck hunters, just behind Texas and has one of the highest hunter densities in the Country. Since 1980 the total number of duck hunters has remained stable at about 82,300.

Forty percent of Wisconsin's harvest was mallards raised here and in neighboring states. Wood ducks made up about 16 percent of the bag. Greenwing teal, mostly from boreal forest, accounted for about 10 percent. Bluewing teal provided about 8 percent of the kill but 50 percent of those birds were homegrown.

**Spring Conditions:**

Normal rainfall was recorded in the Great Lakes Region for the nesting period although June was below normal. Very dry conditions were reported in the Dakotas for the breeding season. The Canadian prairie pot-hole region had above average precipitation during breeding and through June. Over-all, conditions in Canada were excellent.

**Status of Ducks - Breeding Surveys:**

Mallard production was down this spring but crew members experienced difficult conditions around the Great Lakes while trying to complete the spring brood surveys. Rain and thunder storms delayed aerial surveys and may have contributed to the low mallard counts. Breeding was excellent in the Canadian potholed and the season framework reflects those numbers. Cans are up 23 percent over the long term average (LTA). Bluebills are down again over the LTA. Bluebill numbers have been declining for the past 20 years and the trend continued in 2006, down 37 percent from the LTA. Population estimates for Scaup are at about 3.2 million. Northern Boreal forests have seen changes that are reducing the ability of hens to produce; food, nesting habitat are most suspect. Other survey counts show:

- Bluewing teal – up 30% over LTA
- Greenwing teal – up 39% over LTA
- Pintails – up 32% over LTA
- Canvasbacks – up 23% over LTA
- Scaup – down 37% over LTA

Wetland conditions were up in key breeding areas of the State. The brood survey numbers of Bluewing teal were skewed in 2004 and 2005; it showed unusually high numbers of Bluewings. Survey crews caught Bluewing teal in their migration which inflated the number of breeding birds. The timing of this year's survey was good and reflects very good numbers of breeding Bluewing teal. Wood duck numbers appear to have leveled off.

**Status of Geese:**

In 2005 Goose numbers were up; the breeding surveys for Mississippi Valley Population (MVP) geese were estimated at 344,907, up 25 percent from 2004. MVP geese are up 11 percent this year from 2005. Wisconsin's breeding 2005 showed a 17 percent decline from 2004. However, the 2005 estimate of 124,000 is still well above the LTA of 67,000. Local breeding of Giant Canada geese was up 9 percent from last year.

At an estimated 13,410, the 2005 early season Canada goose harvest was the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest early season harvest on record for this season. Wisconsin's population of giant geese now makes up a greater portion of the over-all bag than MVP birds. MVP geese in the overall bag dropped from 48 percent to 45 percent of Wisconsin's total bag.

**Other Note Worthy Items:**

- Youth hunt – 2,500 kids, 8,713 ducks bagged
- Crews banded 570 morning doves
- The 10 year trend is up 6% for breeding doves
- Wisconsin bagged 180,000 doves with 15,600 hunters
- Nation wide, 22 million doves were bagged by hunters
- Woodcock numbers have stopped falling and leveled off
- Wisconsin Hunters bagged 37,000 woodcock

- Wisconsin DNR will be doing checks for Avian Flu this fall when they conduct bag checks at various boat landings.

An active discussion on the GLIFWC proposal to increase of reservation bag limit to 40 ducks (up from 20) and allow baiting ensued. Acting Chairman John Edelblute read a letter he composed on behalf of the Conservation Congress and signed by Congress Chairman Ed Harvey. The letter declares the Wisconsin Conservation Congress's strong opposition to the GLIFWC proposal. The letter was sent to USFWS as well as every Congressional member from Wisconsin. Kent Van Horn said a decision will most likely come next week. The off reservation duck hunting season runs September to December.

## **PROPOSED WATERFOWL SEASON**

### **Early September Canada Goose Season:**

- September 1 – 15, with a daily bag of 5 geese

*Motion by Al Shook, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Rick Koenig to accept the DNR proposal as written  
Motion passed unanimously on a voice vote with no discussion*

### **Duck Season Bag Limits:**

- 60 Day season
- Daily bag of 6 ducks
- Bag to include 4 mallards of which only 1 may be a hen (USFWS does allow 2 hens), 2 wood ducks, 1 black duck, 2 redheads, 2 scaup, 1 pintail, 1 canvasback, 5 mergansers to include not more than 2 hooded mergansers.

*Motion to accept by Al Shook, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jeff Scott*

Discussion – Dave Nowak wants 3 wood ducks and questioned why we don't have more.

Kent Van Horn has new info on wood ducks; there has been more banding info. Harvest rates from banded ducks shows high level of harvest. Based on what we know from breeding habits, it shows we are harvesting wood ducks at a good rate. But there still is no good way to count wood duck breeding. Bottom line is they (USFWS) feel woodies are not being under-harvested. We are getting data but we may not get an increased bag of wood ducks.

Ray Heidel wants to go with one hen mallard first 10 days and two for the rest of the season. The committee let out a collective sigh and rolled their eyes.

*Motion passes on a voice vote.*

### **Coots:**

- Bag limit 15 per day (up from 2005 bag of 10 per day)

*Motion by Al Shook to accept as proposed, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dick Becker*

*Motion passes by voice vote with no discussion and a tip of the hat to Bill Murphy*

**Duck Season Dates:**

- Northern Zone: Opener September 23 – November 21, no split

*Motion by Rick Koenig to reject the DNR proposed dates, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dave Nowak*

Discussion – several committee members think September 23 opener for the North zone is too early

*Motion to reject the DNR proposal passes by a voice vote*

*New motion by Todd Cook to open Northern Zone September 30 straight through with no split, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jerry Rowland*

Discussion – Al Shook wants the north to open as early as possible. Jerry Rowland wants a one opener State wide because of the complaints of hunters jumping zones. Todd Cook says September 23 is too early. Dave Nowak wants both openers pushed back to October 7.

*Motion passes – show of hands vote, 15 – yes, 3 – no*

- Southern Zone: Opener September 30 – October 8, October 14 – December 3

*Motion by Dick Becker to accept, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Herb Theisen*

Discussion – Dave Nowak wants southern zone to open October 7. Other members want later opener to extend season further into December. Mitchell Fisher thinks the season dates are good as proposed.

*Motion fails by show of hands 7 – yes, 11 – no*

*New motion by Ray Hiedel to open September 30 – October 4, 9 day split, October 14 – December 7, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Chuck Boley*

Dave Nowak thinks the split is too long. Mitchell Fisher objects to losing a weekend of hunting.

*Motion passes by show of hands 17 – yes, 1 – no*

**Canada Geese:**

Statewide Quota for all zones is 131,100 geese (2005 – 62,500, 2004 – 49,200, 2003 85,500).

- Exterior Zone: September 16 – December 16 with a daily bag limit of 2

*Motion by Roger Roehl to accept the DNR proposal, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Al Shook*

Discussion – Mitchell Fisher wants the daily bag to increase to 3 birds per day beginning November 1. Last year (2005) according to Kent Van Horn's harvest report, 25,000 geese were killed by October 31. Only 10,000 more geese were killed from November 1 through the end of the season. Given the size of the quota for the Exterior zone, we would be in no danger to reach or exceed the quota with an increase to 3 birds per day as of November first. Fisher urged the committee to reject the proposal.

*Motion fails by show of hands 8 – yes, 9 – no*

*New motion by Fisher to use the dates proposed by DNR, bag limit 2 geese per day with an increase to 3 birds per day as of November 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Guy McFarren*

Discussion – Kent Van Horn said he was not sure if that was possible.

*Motion passes by show of hands 15 – yes, 1 - no*

- Mississippi River Subzone – September 30 – December 13, 2 birds per day (quota 500)

*Motion by Ray Heidel to reject the DNR proposal, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jeff Scott*

Discussion – Ray Heidel wants the season to start September 30 and run a State wide opening date, he also wants a longer split.

*Motion passes by show of hands 10- yes, 0 – no*

*Motion by Ray Heidel to open goose season September 30 – October 4, 9 day split, October 14 – December 17*

*Motion passes by show of hands 16 – yes, 0 – no*  
(River Rats want to hunt until the River freezes up)

- Horicon Zone: 4 Time periods from September 16 – December 16, daily bag limit of 2, 6 tags per hunter predicted.

*Motion by Al Shook to accept, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Al Marotz*

Discussion – Todd Cook wants to know if we can go to 3 birds per day; he questions why the DNR has lowered the quota. He feels Horicon hunters are being short-changed. Van Horn explains that the number of Horicon hunters is declining and that the success rate has fallen substantially. More hunters prefer to hunt the Exterior zone.

*Motion passes by show of hands 14 – yes, 0 – no*

- Collins Zone: 3 Time periods from September 16 – December 16, a daily bag of 2 birds, 6 tags per hunter predicted

*Motion by Roger Roehl to accept, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dick Becker*

*Motion passes by voice vote*

- Light Geese, brant and white-fronted geese: Light geese (Snow, Blue and Ross) and brant – seasons the same as for Canada goose zones and subzones; daily bag limit 1 brant, and 10 light geese. White-fronted geese – season begins later (9/22) than the Canada goose zones and subzones but ends on or before December 16, daily bag 1 white-fronted goose

*Motion by Roger Roehl to accept, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dick Becker*

*Motion passes by voice vote*

- Falconry Season: accepted as proposed, no discussion

#### **Duck Hunting Hours:**

- Duck Season Shooting Hours: 9 am opener, ½ hour before sunrise beginning the second day and sunset close

*Motion by Todd Cook to reject the DNR proposal, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Guy McFarren*

Discussion – Todd wants the season to open ½ hour before sunrise on opening day, the question passed by a wide margin on the 2005 Spring Questionnaire. Jerry Rowland said if it's a 9:00 am opener it might as well be earlier because hunters will be out well before sun-up anyway to obtain a spot to hunt. Jim Klein wants the early opener too.

Warden Kevin Mickelburg said wardens do not have an official position on the issue but do have some concerns for high (hunter) density areas, especially the Mississippi River. Boat landings are also a concern. Waterfowl identification is difficult for some, especially in the early morning light. Wardens would have to be in the field from 4 am until past 7 pm to watch for early and late shooters.

*Motion fails by hand vote 5 – yes, 10 – no*

*New motion by Al Shook, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dick Becker to accept the DNR proposal of a 9:00 am opener with ½ hour beginning on the second day*

*Motion passes with hand count 17 – yes, 3 – no*

#### **Other Issues:**

- DNR proposal to eliminate the Horicon Intensive Management Zone

*Motion to accept the DNR proposal by Chuck Boely, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jerry Rowland*

Kent Van Horn discussed some of the issues regarding the idea and mentioned that the rule may be written with a sunset clause giving the Department the opportunity to address the issue at a later date if any problems occur from the action.

*Motion passes by a voice vote*

- North – South Zone Line Proposed Change

*Motion by Jerry Rowland to accept the DNR proposed zone line change, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Todd Cook*

Discussion – this issue has been kicked around for 2 years, the committee was fatigued by several past debates. There was no new discussion.

*The motion passed by unanimous voice vote*

**Other Business:**

- Todd Cook briefly discussed the waterfowl (duck) school for wardens; Todd helps out with the class. Todd is looking for more volunteers to help teach the new warden recruits. Give him a call if you wish to help.
- Ray Heidel discussed the on going battle with USFWS regarding the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). *It is more like the CCCP (Communist Comprehensive Conservation Plan)* because the Federal Government is stepping on the State's Rights to govern our water ways. The plan goes against the State Constitution and our public doctrine. Navigational, hunting and fishing rights are being taken away. All the while Our Governor and the Secretary of the DNR stand on the sidelines with their hands in their pockets and shrug their shoulders. He warned that this is a test case for the Country. If this bad plan goes through it will have far reaching implications to all other National Refuges. He urged all committee members to write and call their congress representatives to protest.
- Jerry Rowland complained about the disposition of our committee's proposal to begin shooting hours ½ hour before sunrise on opening day. We developed a question at the December 2005 Migratory Committee meeting. What happened to it at the Executive Consul meeting last winter, how come it didn't make it on the questionnaire this past spring? There was nothing in the minutes from the meeting, only the vote. Acting Migratory Chairman John Edelblute said he will make sure that does not happen again. As Secretary of the Congress, he will insure that all proposals will have a fair hearing and the discussions will be recorded in the future.

*Motion by Roger Roehl to adjourn, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jerry Rowland, motion passes by voice vote*  
Meeting adjourns at 10:15 PM

Respectfully submitted by Mitchell Fisher, Acting Migratory Committee Secretary